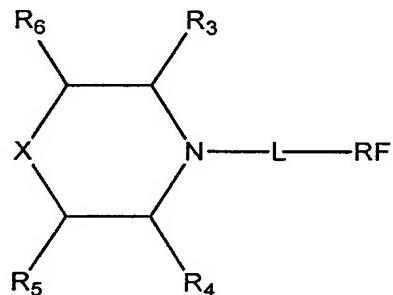
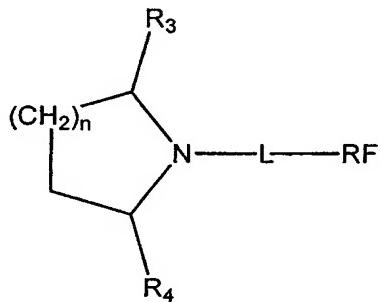
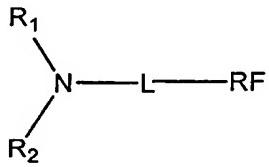


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Withdrawn) A method for characterising a molecule by mass spectrometry, which molecule comprises one or more free amino groups, which method comprises:
 - (a) reacting one or more free amino groups in the molecule with a mass tag reagent comprising a reactive functionality capable of reacting with an amino group, and a tertiary amino group linked to the reactive functionality; and
 - (b) characterising the molecule by mass spectrometry.
2. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the reactive functionality, is selected from active esters of carbonic acids, alkenyl sulphones, haloalkanes, maleimides, isocyanates, isothiocyanates, ketones, aldehydes, sulphonyl-halides, carboxylic-halides, anhydride esters and alkenes.
3. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the tertiary amino group comprises a dialkyl substituted amino group, in which the alkyl groups may together with the nitrogen to which they are attached, form a cyclic group, and wherein the cyclic group may comprise an N, S and/or O atom.
4. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the tertiary amino group is linked to the reactive functionality by a linker selected from an alkylene group and a phenylene group.
5. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the mass tag reagent is selected from a compound having one of the following formulae:



wherein R¹ and R² may be the same or different and are independently selected from alkyl groups and aralkyl groups;

R³, R⁴, R⁵ and R⁶ may be the same or different and are independently selected from hydrogen and alkyl groups;

n is an integer of 0, 1 or 2;

X is selected from N-alkyl, S and O;

the reactive functionality RF is selected from active esters of carbonic acids, alkenyl sulphones, haloalkanes, maleimides, isocyanates, isothiocyanates, ketones, aldehydes, sulphonyl-halides, carboxylic-halides, anhydride esters, alkenes, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters, hydroxybenzotriazole esters, hydroxyzabenzotriazole esters, nitrophenyl esters, trichlorophenyl esters and pentafluorophenyl esters; and the linker L is selected from an alkylene group and a phenylene group.

6. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein R¹ and R² are independently selected from methyl, ethyl, propyl, iso-propyl, cyclohexyl, benzyl, and substituted benzyl groups.
7. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein R³, R⁴, R⁵ and R⁶ are independently selected from hydrogen and methyl, ethyl, propyl, and iso-propyl groups.
8. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein n is 2.
9. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein X is O;
10. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein when X is N-alkyl, alkyl is selected from a methyl, ethyl, propyl, iso-propyl or cyclohexyl group.
11. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein RF is selected from esters of carbonic acid, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters, hydroxybenzotriazole esters, hydroxyzabenzotriazole esters, nitrophenyl esters, trichlorophenyl esters and pentafluorophenyl esters.
12. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 5, wherein L is selected from substituted or unsubstituted -(CH₂)_n- in which n is an integer of from 1 to 5, and substituted or unsubstituted -(C₆H₄)-.
13. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 12, wherein L is selected from CH₂- and -(CH₂)₃-.
14. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the mass tag reagent is an ester of dimethylaminoglycine.
15. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the mass tag reagent has a modified isotope distribution.

16. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 15, wherein the isotope distribution of one or more of the following types of atoms is modified in the mass tag reagent: hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, sulphur and a halogen.

17. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the isotope distribution is modified by replacing a portion of or all of ^1H by ^2H , a portion of or all of ^{12}C by ^{13}C , a portion of or all of ^{16}O by ^{18}O and/or a portion of or all of ^{14}N by ^{15}N .

18. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the molecule comprises a protein, a polypeptide, a peptide or an amino acid, or a derivative of the above.

19. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 18, which method comprises:

- (a) labelling free amino functionalities in the molecule with a mass tag reagent;
- (b) cleaving the molecule with a sequence specific cleavage reagent, to produce cleavage products;
- (c) labelling the free amino groups generated in the molecule by the cleavage reagent with a second mass tag reagent; and
- (d) analysing the resulting cleavage products by mass spectrometry.

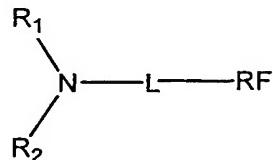
20. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of molecules are characterised by mass spectrometry, wherein the characterisation includes determination of the quantity of at least one of the molecules.

21. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 20, wherein each of the plurality of molecules is labelled with a differentially isotopically labelled mass tag reagent, such that the identity and quantity of each molecule may be determined by mass spectrometry.

22. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 20, wherein the mass tag reagent comprises a DMG mass tag reagent.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) A mass tag reagent for labeling a molecule to be characterized by mass spectrometry, having ~~one of the following formulae~~ formula:



wherein R¹ and R² may be the same or different and are independently selected from alkyl groups and aralkyl groups;

the reactive functionality RF is selected from the group consisting of active esters of carbonic acids, alkenyl sulphones, haloalkanes, maleimides, isocyanates, isothiocyanates, ketones, aldehydes, sulphonyl-halides, carboxylic-halides, anhydride esters, alkenes, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters, hydroxybenzotriazole esters, hydroxyazabenzotriazole esters, nitrophenyl esters, trichlorophenyl esters and pentafluorophenyl esters; and

the linker L is ~~selected from~~ an alkylene group and a phenylene group.

25. (Previously Presented) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein R¹ and R² are independently selected from methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, cyclohexyl, benzyl, and substituted benzyl groups.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently Amended) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein RF is selected from the group consisting of esters of carbonic acid, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters,

hydroxybenzotriazole esters, hydroxyazabenzotriazole esters, nitrophenyl esters, trichlorophenyl esters and pentafluorophenyl esters.

31. (Currently Amended) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein L is selected from substituted or unsubstituted -(CH₂)_n- in which n is an integer of from 1 to 5, and substituted or unsubstituted -(C₆H₄)-.

32. (Previously Presented) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein L is selected from -CH₂- and -(CH₂)₃-.

33. (Previously Presented) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein the mass tag reagent has a modified isotope distribution.

34. (Previously Presented) A mass tag reagent according to claim 24, wherein the isotope distribution of one or more of the following types of atoms is modified in the mass tag reagent: hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, sulphur and a halogen.

35. (Currently Amended) A mass tag reagent according to claim 34, wherein the isotope distribution is modified by replacing a portion of or all of ¹H by ²H, a portion of or all of ¹²C by ¹³C, a portion of or all of ¹⁶O by ¹⁸O and/or a portion of or all of ¹⁴N by ¹⁵N.

36. (Currently Amended) An array of mass tags for labelling one or more molecules to be characterised by mass spectrometry, which array comprises two or more mass tags tag reagents as defined in claim 24.

37. (Currently Amended) An array of mass tags according to claim 36, wherein every mass tag reagent in the array has the same chemical structure, and each mass tag reagent in the array is an isotopomer of the other mass tags tag reagents in the array such that each mass tag reagent in the array has a different mass.

38. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A kit for purification of labelled analyte molecules, which kit comprises one or more mass tags tag reagents as defined in claim [[23]] 24, and a cation exchange resin.

39. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A kit according to claim 38, which kit further comprises one or more components selected from a reaction buffer for the coupling of the mass tag reagent to analyte molecules, a buffer for washing the cation exchange resin, and a buffer for elution of the labelled peptides from the cation exchange resin.